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Stephon McArthur, Oral History Interview, 2022

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Interview with Stephon McArthur (SM) conducted via Zoom by Ja'Nae Lehman (JL) on October 29, 2022 for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by Ja'Nae Lehman

JL: Hello, my name is Ja'Nae Lehman. I am here with my fellow classmate Stephon McArthur. We are in History of Journalism at Eastern Michigan University. Today we will be discussing how Covid-19 impacted McArthur's life and adjusting to moving to a different school while the pandemic was taking place in early 2020. It's Saturday, October 29, 2022. McArthur is a Junior at Eastern Michigan University, studying Media Studies and Journalism. So to start Stephon do you do anything on campus?

SM: Well I do the NAACP on campus but that is really it.

JL: Okay that's nice. What do you all do?

SM: Well we have had a couple of fundraiser donations. We gave away things to people like deodorant, clothing, and stuff like that that they need, we did that one day. We do a lot of things. That is really the only thing, I am a transfer so I don't know too many people. So I just try to do that and do my classes.

JL: Were you working before or during COVID?

SM: Well during COVID, I was working at a retail store, Home Depot. During the pandemic, I was working at Crunch Fitness.

JL: How long were you working at Crunch Fitness?

SM: I was there for about a year or so.

JL: So how did the pandemic affect you mentally?

SM: Yeah, it definitely affected me. I wanted to go right into school. I was always working, since my junior year in high school. My parents always instilled working in me, and I feel like I always work. I always had that goal of giving myself that, grinding and working.

JL: Okay.

SM: I have been doing that since I was 17. I don't know anything different. When we were not having our schooling to fill that void, during the pandemic. Working then coming back home afterward, not having anything to do afterward because everything was closed. You can't go out or do things with your family. I'm like, what is next? What's next in my career? I'm 22 and now I am 24, so what do I do now? So yeah stuff like that kind of impacted me mentally because I transferred to Hampton from a community college. Now, I got to transfer again.

JL: Right, you had to do it all over again.

SM: Yeah, it was kind of a pain. But I am here now so it is okay. I am kind of liking the school. It's not that bad. It was bad back when I look at it during the pandemic, but it's not now because everything is working out. I'm making good grades. My family is healthy. My mom and dad didn't get sick from Covid. My dad did get sick for a little while, but it

wasn't anything too serious. I think I was just glad that nobody didn't get sick close to me. I have 3 brothers.

JL: You mentioned you are a person who works and likes keeping yourself busy. What things did you try to do at home to make sure that you were still keeping yourself busy and active?

SM: During quarantine. I did watch a lot of movies, movies I had never seen before. I did catch up on a lot of T.V. I was watching a lot of movies from the past to catch up. So that and pushups, stuff like that. I was trying to keep myself in some type of shape. I want to say that myself and my dad even started up this podcast a little while ago. I was just going on Instagram Live, starting a podcast talking about sports, movies, about the future. It was about anything that came alive during the pandemic. I got a chance to watch movies like Braveheart and I got a chance to watch all of the Die-Hard movies, I had never seen those before, all of the James Bond movies. I got a chance to catch up on movies that came out before I was even born. That was definitely what kept me going during the pandemic. Watching movies and everything like that. Also a little bit of reading too, I love reading autobiography books and et cetera.

JL: Yeah during quarantine, it's like what else can you do?

SM: Yeah catching up on movies that you've never seen you know? Or even movies on Netflix or catching up on T.V. shows. To me, that is a great mental health thing to do. Take the time out for yourself and do something that you actually want to do.

JL: I agree. So to clarify, do you live with your dad right now?

SM: Yes, I live at home.

JL: Did you move here when the pandemic started? When did you move?

SM: Yes. I was going to school in Virginia, so I was living in Virginia, but I have lived in Michigan before. I came back here during the pandemic.

JL: Okay. Did you fly here or did you drive?

SM: I drove.

JL: Although it was out of your control, do you think you regretted transferring during the pandemic?

SM: Somewhat yes, I do. I kind of wish I would've transferred before. It kind of set me back a little bit of time, but so far I have enjoyed my decision of transferring here to EMU. It was the right decision. I feel like it was at such a bad time and I think I should have done it sooner.

JL: And what was the hardest part about transferring?

SM: I would say probably trying to gather all the materials, like transcripts and whatnot, the necessary things so I could be fully prepared and so I made it my mission too, to start classes on time and get my schedule on time. Getting things done before the deadline. I didn't want to miss any classes.

JL: What was the scariest thing for you about Covid-19?

SM: I say the scariest thing for me is that I was thinking about how I was going stay safe for something like this. Because things like this have never really ever happened and it did. It happened, but not to this like extreme. People were getting sick. Seeing your loved ones get sick and stuff like that I know it is hard. So my thing was to keep myself safe and keep the people around me safe with still talking to family that's back home in Virginia and checking up on them to make sure everybody's health is still good. Especially in the beginning, because it was really dangerous at first.

JL: Did you learn or teach yourself anything new while being in quarantine? Other than watching movies and exercising, what else did you do?

SM: Not really anything new. I just started taking time for myself. I feel like quarantine gave people a sense of relaxation just to be laid back and do the things that we haven't able to do before quarantining. Just relaxing and reading more. I watched movies. I worked out. It just gave me more time to do things that I didn't have time to do in the past. Trying to balance both lives outside and inside of the school was a lot, so a lot of the things that I did during the quarantine were things I wouldn't have had the chance to do before Covid.

JL: Do you think that Covid is going to be here forever? Do you think it will be like the Flu?

SM: Yes, I do think that Covid is the new Flu. I think it's something that we have to assess

and normalize, but we have to still take precautions in every way. Covid is still spreading. Social distancing, wearing masks, or sanitizing everything. I think Covid is a new thing that we have to be safe about.

JL: I get that you feel that way. Did the pandemic your nightlife at all? We are young, did it affect hanging out with friends or anything like that?

SM: I don't think so. Not too much. I really feel like I haven't been going out as much since the pandemic, I found myself just being at home. I got used to it. I have always been at home more than out there.

JL: I see. Okay well, that is all I have for you. Thank you for letting me interview you, I enjoyed getting to know you.

SM: Thank you.

Recording fades out.